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The 'Queer Film Festival'

By Bishop John M. D'Arcy

For the second time, the University of Notre Dame is sponsoring, through six of its departments, a seminar and film festival under the title, "Queer Film Festival." The presenters who have been scheduled have a history of not supporting, and indeed openly opposing, church teaching concerning the morality of homosexual acts.

One of the presenters is Sister Jeannine Gramick. After a thorough review of the writings of Sister Gramick and her associate, Father Robert Nugent, Pope John Paul II, on May 14, 1999, personally approved a notification of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which included the following:

"Father Nugent and Sister Gramick often stated that they seek, in keeping with the church's teaching, to treat homosexual persons, 'with respect, compassion and sensitivity.' However, the promotion of errors and ambiguities is not consistent with a Christian attitude of true respect and compassion: persons who are struggling with homosexuality no less than others have the right to receive the authentic teaching of the church from those who minister to them. The ambiguities and the errors of the approach of Father Nugent and Sister Gramick have caused confusion among the Catholic people and harmed the

community of the church. For these reasons, Sister Jeannine Gramick, SSND, and Father Robert Nugent, SDS, are permanently prohibited from any pastoral work involving homosexual persons."

When Sister Gramick continued to cause confusion on this issue, she and Father Nugent were told not to speak further on this matter. Sister Gramick has refused to accept this decision. Other speakers in this seminar are long-time advocates for the acceptance of homosexual activity and homosexual marriage. Among them is Terrence McNally, author of the offensive play, "Corpus Christi," which I read in order to give guidance to our people at the time of its presentation at a state university within our diocese. In this play, so offensive to Catholics, McNally has Jesus, whom the apostles are following, strike a Catholic priest, who supports church teaching on homosexuality. He also writes the following:

"Very few Christians are willing to consider that their Lord and Savior was a man, with real appetites, especially sexual ones. To imagine that he was not only sexually active, but a homosexual as well, is gross blasphemy. And they would deny others the right to conceive of him as a such."

Academic freedom

This presentation is an abuse of academic freedom. Pope John Paul II makes clear the place of academic freedom when he says it must always be linked to certain values central to a Catholic university.

"A Catholic university possesses the autonomy necessary to develop its distinctive identity and pursue its proper mission. Freedom in research and teaching is recognized and respected according to the principles and methods of each individual discipline, so long as the rights of the individual and of the community are preserved within the confines of the truth and the common good."

John Paul II, "Ex Corde Ecclesiae"

Freedom is always linked to truth. In this seminar, held at a Catholic university, there is no place given to the presentation of Catholic teaching on the matter of homosexuality. The rights of others are violated. What about the

rights of the church to have its teachings properly presented? What about the rights of parents of those students at Notre Dame who find the content of this seminar offensive?

People with homosexual orientation must always be accepted with dignity and respect. They belong in the mainstream of our Catholic life, not shunned or separated or told they cannot live a sound and chaste spiritual life.

Since no place has been made at this seminar for the clear and accurate presentation of Catholic teaching, I present the following statements from the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" so that the rights of the Catholic community and the primacy of the truth revealed by Christ may be clear.

"Homosexuality refers to relations between men and women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on sacred Scriptures, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

"The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

"Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection."

"Catechism of the Catholic Church," 2357-59